

Storm Wreaks Havoc Here

By Kurt Indvik

The normally subdued Santa Maria and Hatfield Creeks were transformed by heavy rains and burst dams into raging rivers which combined to cut a destructive swath through Ramona late last week, destroying or severely damaging most everything that stood in the way. It was the worst flooding seen in this area ever, long time residents say.

While no persons were seriously injured in the mainstem Wednesday night, February 20, or the flooding that followed, counted as victims were at least 150-200 families whose homes were damaged by water and mud, according to the Ramona Fire Department. Several businesses also took a beating from the flood waters. Rescues became the order of the evening; some of them heroic, all of them life-saving. The fire department listed 35 rescues it participated in, and doubtless there were many more carried out by neighbors and friends. It was a night which certainly tested the mettle of the community.

It began when some 4.07 inches of rain fell like a heavy curtain on Wednesday evening, most of that coming in a three-hour period from about 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. with the creeks and tributaries already swollen, several earthen dams to the northeast above Ramona burst and sent yet more water down into the valley sweeping mud and debris with it as the flood waters rose quickly around homes, and businesses, carrying away at least one mobile home and several small buildings.

Hardest hit, of course, were those with homes and businesses near the banks of the Santa Maria Creek which easily overflowed its banks and swept up higher than it had ever been in recent history.

While Ramonans bet-

evening the water was coming into the Richardson's house and though they stayed at the home until about midnight trying to save what they could from damage they were finally forced to flee to a nearby neighbor's house.

"We have anywhere from six inches to two feet of water and mud in the house at various spots," Richardson said. Their pool also has several inches of mud at its bottom.

Later that night, about 2 a.m. Thursday, a dramatic rescue took place to free two families caught atop a roof of a home on Askew Way which was surrounded by flood water four and five feet deep. Eight persons comprising the families of Henry Villagomez and Cliff Price were stranded on the roof of the Price's home since about 9 p.m. after the flood had made it impossible for them to cross the street to higher ground. After repeated earlier attempts by the Ramona Fire Department to reach the two families, the group was instructed to get on the roof. Helicopters were requested for a rescue but all were grounded.

Then, at 2 a.m. Ralph McIntosh arrived with a grader which he drove through the swirling flood to the Price home. Though at first the families were

leary about climbing aboard the machine, it was their last chance and all eight were carried out by the grader.

"Everybody was cold, wet and very frightened," said Henry Villagomez. "Up on the roof we could see the water rising and rising. Logs and debris were floating by as well as propane tanks." But thanks to McIntosh both families were safe, Gomez said. He also wanted to thank those who helped clean out his flood damaged house this past weekend. Though the Villagomez family and the Price family suffered, he said there was something good out of the disaster.

"Something terribly good came out of all this, I think. The floods made people want to help each other. It made a oneness in the community."

William Smith, owner of Hi-Way Market on State Route 78, stood out in front of his business Friday morning. The building was surrounded by water and mud several feet deep. Nearby sat two partially submerged vehicles which had been swept down from above his store and now sat next to the gas pumps which were also under water and mud. How bad was the damage inside his small store?

"Just go take a look inside. I don't even know where to start," he tried to laugh, smiling ruefully. Inside a muddy mark on the wall showed the water line; more than two feet at the height of the flood. Mud and merchandise caked the floor and there was a smell of spoiling food and dairy products.

"The flood just picked up
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Weather

February 18	68	50
February 19	65	56
February 20	65	32
February 21	62	49
February 22	45	32
February 23	48	37
February 24	75	53

RAINFALL

February 18	1.51
February 19	1.19
February 20	1.03
February 21	4.07
Total Rain This Storm	7.80
Total Rain to Date	29.25
Last Year	18.91

tened down the hatches and fought off the flood waters as best possible, others were losing the battle and fled their homes. Particularly hard hit were homes in the Ramona Acres, with several streets such as Hunter and Askew Way being flooded out totally, with most homes being evacuated.

The Richardson family, 453 N. Hunter, had been living in their home for seven years and had seen some heavy rains before, but this caught them by surprise, said Albert Richardson.

"We went out to check on the back of the house, and by the time we got around to the front we were standing in water," Richardson said early this week as his family continued to clean the mud and debris out of their home. By 10 p.m. that Wednesday

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Ramona Flood

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one of the refrigerated cases there in the back and tilted it," he said shaking his head. Meanwhile, out in back, a couple of men carried large sides of beef out of a small butcher shop that operated behind the market. Smith, who has owned the shop for the past three years was dumbfounded at the destruction of his business by the flood which, he said, had apparently begun about 8 or 9 p.m. "It's just unbelievable, I look at this and I just can't believe what I see."

Also hit hard was the Ramona Center, 135 Tenth St., which sits close to the banks of the Santa Maria Creek. Mud and floodwater invaded several businesses housed in the center including the Rusty Spur Restaurant late Wednesday and owners were busy by Friday in digging out their businesses.

As reports of displaced families and emergency rescues came over the radio, Fire Chief Don Mitchell contacted Gordon Zick, who is a member of the Civil Defense committee here, and responsible for the emergency hospital. The multi-purpose room at Ramona Elementary was opened at about 10 p.m. for emergency shelter but because Montecito Road was flooded out, Zick could not reach the emergency hospital storage at the Ramona Airport until about 1 a.m. with the help of four-wheel drive vehicles.

According to Zick, at least 25 people stayed at the multi-purpose room Wednesday night, sleeping on cots and blankets provided by the Civil Defense program here. The Ramona school district served food to those displaced by the floods both Wednesday night and all Thursday. A smaller number of Ramonians took shelter at the emergency shelter Thursday night. The shelter was closed by late Friday.

"I've had the key to that hospital for 14 years and, you know, that is the first time we've ever had to use it," said Zick. "Considering our lack of practice at this sort of thing, I think things went fairly smoothly."

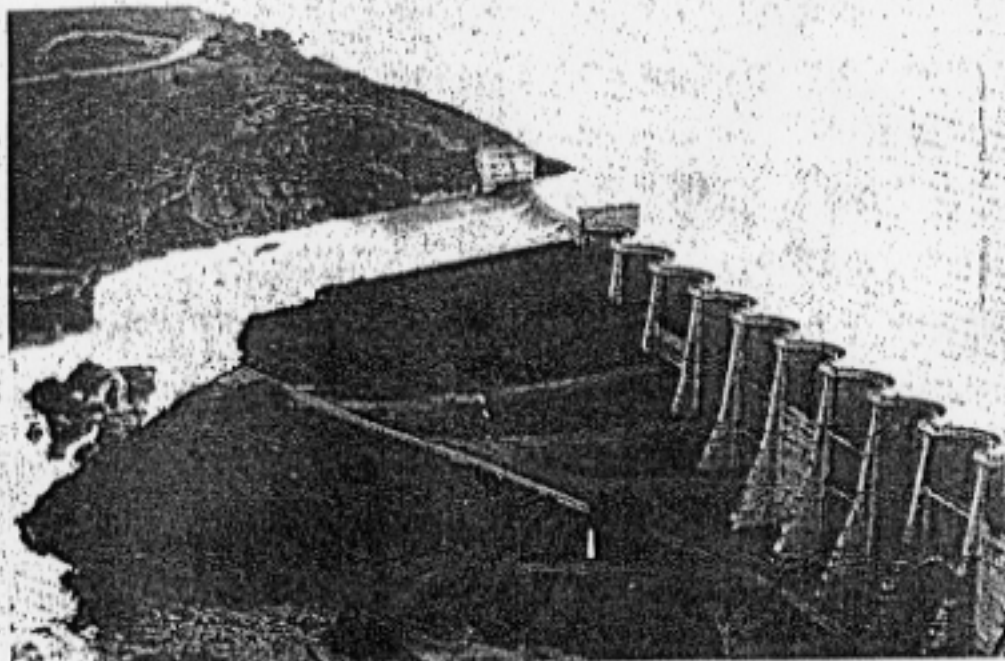
By Thursday morning, Ramonians began taking

stock of the damage. State Route 78 was closed both to Escondido and Julian, and for a time the California Highway Patrol was monitoring traffic coming into Ramona on SR 67 from Poway due to rock and mud slides along that highway. In effect, Ramona was totally cut off for a period on Thursday, and as word spread of another serious storm expected to slam the county by early Thursday afternoon, Sun Valley Market was swamped with panic buyers hoping to stock up on food and water in the event of an emergency. That storm, however, never materialized and Ramonians on Friday began the grim job of cleaning up.

Services were sporadically cut off in various areas on Wednesday night and Thursday as crews from road, power, telephone and water companies struggled to correct the problems which were, in some cases, unreachable due to road conditions. The Ramona Municipal Water District reported losing two of its well pumping stations in the RMWD well field which is, of course, virtually in the Santa Maria Creek bed. One pump station was completely carried away, another was uprooted.

Telephone lines and power lines were knocked down during the storm, temporarily cutting off those services in several areas though by late Thursday all services were reportedly available again.

Other damage included most all of the Ramona Park area which was inundated with flood water late Wednesday and early Thursday. The older portions of the park, including the old arena, and announcing tower, and the 4-H livestock area were damaged heavily. The tower was swept away, as was much of the arena. Also, apartment construction along the Santa Maria Creek was damaged or threatened. At least one building at the Pepper Tree apartments complex was undercut by floodwaters and workers had to work feverishly Wednesday night to prevent further damage by dumping rock, tires and sand bags in a protective wall around the building.



Wall Of Water Tumbles Over Dam

Sutherland Reservoir continued to overflow last week as the latest in a series of storms soaked Ramona and the rest of San Diego County. This is only the third time in 25 years that the dam has overflowed. All aerial photographs in this

week's Sentinel were possible through the courtesy of MacKenzie Aviation which supplied the plane and pilot Cliff Carlberg who flew the aircraft. Photo by Kurt Indvik.



All That's Left

This was what was left of Magnolia Avenue last Friday in the wake of a rampaging flood which swept away several hundred yards of pavement near SR 78. Photo by Kurt Indvik.



Where To Start?

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Ramona. The business was ruined by the raging floods of last week. Photo by Kurt Indvik.

Ramona Sentinel

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RAMONA, CALIFORNIA

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Rains, Winds Give Ramona The Old One-Two

By Kurt Indvik

Pounded by almost nine inches of rain and pelted with gusty winds, Ramonans slogged through yet another series of storms which hit the community and the rest of the Southland beginning a week ago.

No storm related injuries were reported in Ramona, but a number of homes and businesses were hit with some flooding, and several adventuresome drivers became stuck in flooded-out sections of road in Ramona. There was at least one downed power line and one power blackout and the winds knocked down several trees including one on Third St. which halted traffic for several hours on Monday.

Generally, however, the wave of storm fronts have simply left a lot of water on the roads, made backyards muddy, and things in an overall damp condition.

The latest series of storms began a week ago when 1.66 inches of rain was dropped in a 24-hour period Thursday combining with near freezing temperatures, according to the Ramona Fire Department. The next two days brought rain totals of .33 inches and .45 inches before a new storm front moved in Sunday evening and dropped 1.71 inches total that day. While Monday saw another 1.51 inches fall to earth Tuesday was absolutely torrential as 2.16 inches soaked Ramona and caused additional problems on the roadways. That brings the storm total to 8.75 inches in one week, and 21.41 inches so far this year compared to 16.5 inches last year at this time.

The California Highway Patrol and the local Sheriff's deputies reported no serious automobile accidents due to the rains,

but with all the water Sheriff's reserves and CHP officers were kept busy over the weekend and into the week putting up barricades in front of washed out road sections and controlling traffic.

The usual roads had their problems, according to the County Road Department here. State Route 78 near the intersection of Olive where the Santa Maria Creek crosses has been flooded out for most of the week, as is a section of Magnolia which is flooded by the Hatfield Creek. Also, Slt 78 was flooded by Hatfield Creek in one section of road near the Hi-Way Market. Other roads experiencing troubles included Montecito Road and Ramona streets.

A power outage affected 546 people in the downtown area Sunday morning according to San Diego Gas and Electric spokesman Fred Vaughn. The outage started at 12:49 a.m. and

ended at 2:18 a.m. It was caused by a tree branch hitting some power lines.

Sutherland Reservoir joined the rest of San Diego County's reservoirs in spilling over when it reached its maximum point at 5:30 a.m. Tuesday, according to the Ramona Municipal Water District. This was the third year in a row the dam has overflowed its edge, and it is also only the third time in its 25-year history.

RMWD figures show that some 2.5 billion gallons of water flowed into the reservoir over a five-day period, culminating in the water going over the top of the spillway early Tuesday.

Though both major highways were open as of early Wednesday, road officials caution drivers on the slick pavement and possibility of blocked roads due to mudslides and flooding.

The weather has stepped

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A number of people under estimated flooded areas in Ramona and became small rivers raging across local roads. A



Rains, Winds

Cont. from Front Page

or hampered flying at the Ramona Airport, a spokesman reports, but there is no damage to the runway due to the rains, and there have been no mishaps there.

High Surf

Trucks coming down Main Street during these past rainy days sent pedestrians running for their lives as they launched waves from their wheels which landed on the sidewalks. Photo by Kurt Indyk.